

frequent flyers too.” He suggests that these teachers need training and support to shift their mindset and use more effective techniques, and concludes, “Transforming school discipline is a team effort that must be led by administrators with vision, energy, focus, perseverance, a willingness to self-reflect, and an ability to bring people along.”

“Calling All Frequent Flyers” by Ross Greene in *Educational Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 68, #2, p. 28-34); this article can be purchased at <http://www.ascd.org>

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3. Developing Executive Skills in “Lazy” Students

(Originally titled “Lazy – or Not?”)

In this *Educational Leadership* article, New Hampshire-based psychologist/author Peg Dawson suggests another way of looking at laziness, a label frequently applied to some students. A better way of understanding these supposedly slothful underachievers, she says, is that they lack executive skills – the cognitive processes required to initiate and follow through on tasks, a solid working memory and attention span, skills at performance monitoring, inhibition of impulses, and goal-directed persistence. Dawson says these skills don’t fully mature until age twenty. For children who are behind in developing them, the symptoms are:

- Trouble getting started on tasks
- Easily distracted
- Papers and assignments lost or left behind
- Homework not handed in
- Careless mistakes from rushing through work or dawdling
- Not knowing where to begin with long-term assignments
- Putting off tasks till the last minute, misjudging time
- Disorganized work space and notebooks

These problems tend to become acute in middle school as students deal with multiple teachers and less support.

Dawson recommends an RTI-like framework to helping these students develop their executive skills:

• Tier 1 – Teachers establish classroom routines, explicitly teach organizational skills, and build fun activities to motivate students:

- Teach routines for writing down assignments, collecting homework, etc.
- Review classroom rules and role-play compliance.
- Use electronic tools so parents and students can access assignments and progress.
- Teach how to organize notebooks.
- Teach how to plan homework sessions and screen out distractions.
- Reward the class, e.g., if 80 percent of the week’s homework is handed in on time.

• Tier 2 – Students who are still struggling with executive skills get more intense interventions, including:

- Break tasks into parts or make them less open-ended.
- Establish an after-school homework club.

- Provide weekly progress reports to parents.
- Ask parents to have at-home incentives tied to daily and weekly progress reports.
- Coach small groups of students how to plan homework, remember things, and organize notebooks.
- Set up peer-tutoring programs or train volunteer tutors.
- Have students come to class during free time or after school to do unfinished work.
- Tier 3 – When Tier 1 and 2 are not enough, parents, teachers, and students need to work together to create an individual support plan:
 - Define the target behavior and the criteria for success.
 - Identify and implement specific modifications, e.g., a distraction-free homework spot.
 - Explicitly teach, model, and rehearse executive skills.
 - Give visual reminders.
 - Monitor the student's independent use of skills over time.
 - Hire a coach to work with the student.

“Lazy – or Not?” by Peg Dawson in *Educational Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 68, #2, p. 35-38); article can be purchased at <http://www.ascd.org>; the author is at pegdawson@comcast.net.
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4. Teaching Students to Argue in Science Classes

In this *Review of Educational Research* article, SUNY Binghamton professor Andy Cavagnetto explores the efficacy of teaching K-12 students to conduct scientific arguments. The way scientists argue, he says, is different from lawyers' arguments, which tend to be win-lose. Scientists argue to vet ideas as they work toward a common goal of advancing scientific knowledge – “collaboration through critique is a process of negotiating meaning,” he says. In theory, scientific argumentation in classrooms should:

- Develop cognitive and metacognitive processes;
- Develop communication skills;
- Develop critical reasoning skills;
- Support students' understandings of scientific culture and practice;
- Foster scientific literacy.

But argumentation is used in very few science classrooms, says Cavagnetto: “Historically in school science, the facts or the right answers have been emphasized often to the exclusion of scientific practices and thinking. As such, students often work independently or in pairs with little opportunity to share findings, interpretations, or ideas with peers... Science instruction attempts to replicate the science process using cookbook-style labs that serve as verification of ideas rather than construction and critique of ideas. Such activities focus on surface structures of science – hypotheses, methods, results, and conclusions – rather than the discourse at the heart of these processes. The lack of argument has led to a conception of science as a collection of static facts about nature and a perception of science as a secular religion.”

Cavagnetto looked at 54 studies and found three approaches to teaching scientific argumentation: